

WSCC rep champions reliability in face of strong market demands

The cost-conscience marketplace has presented many challenges to those committed to system reliability, including **Mark Meyer**, a power operations specialist in Golden. As the 2000 and 2001 Operations Committee vice-chair for the Western Systems Coordinating Council, Meyer embraces those challenges and looks forward to influencing how to promote reliability in these turbulent times.

Meyer, a Western original, brings almost 30 years of power systems experience to the vice-chair position. This experience includes an electrical engineering degree from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and a career that has encompassed powerplant design for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, maintenance engineering for the Bureau of Reclamation at the Huron District Office and power systems operation at Western's Watertown Operations Office.

As a power operations specialist, he coordinates the operation of Western's four control centers.

In his vice-chair post, Meyer helps to direct the course of WSCC, the largest of 10 regional reliability councils of the North American Electric Reliability Council.

WSCC is devoted to promoting reliability and coordinating the operating and planning activities of its 102 member systems in the western United States, Canada and Mexico. He said being a WSCC member benefits Western because we can be actively

involved in advancing reliability and in affecting the debate regarding such hot topics as deregulation and competition.

"The goal now is to facilitate the marketplace while operating the system reliably," he said. "Before, the reliability folks tended not to listen to the marketing folks. We can't afford to do that anymore."

"When we used to do things without considering their input, we didn't realize the impacts to the marketplace. Now we must consider those impacts."

Meyer speaks particularly of the need to curtail transmission when a particular path is overloaded. "Under the old system, we weren't concerned if the curtailment had a huge dollar impact. But if you are a marketer competing in the energy business, curtailments come straight out of your bottom line. Although marketers hate to see curtailments, their main concern is that their competitors aren't getting an unfair advantage. The goal now is open access and we need to make sure all marketplace participants are treated equally."

"Another hot topic for the committee is WSCC's new Reliability Management System, which was implemented in September. Members who voluntarily sign RMS contracts are assessed monthly on such things as control performance standards and judged quarterly on such areas as recovery from disturbances."

Those who do not meet these standards are sanctioned. Sanctions can range from letters of reprimand to fines of thousands of dollars, depending upon the severity of the infraction and prior offenses.

Meyer thinks such sanctions have already had a positive influence. "The criteria selected for enforcement in the RMS program, such as maintaining adequate reserves and keeping transmission flows below critical values, directly affect system reliability."

"Although it can be a pain to have



SEE NEXT PAGE

sanctions, knowing that your performance is being monitored by the reliability council causes system operators to more heavily emphasize operating within the reliability criteria.”

Another aspect of Meyer’s new post is that he will help appoint subcommittee chairs and task force and workgroup members. He will also set the agenda for the meetings that every WSCC representative is invited to attend. Agendas these days are also likely to include discussions on energy scheduling and accounting automation and proposed legislation, along with the Operations Committee’s normal business.

“The deregulation issues we are discussing involve how to maintain reliability given the pressure from marketing groups or given very limited transmission and generation expansion,” Meyer said. He said another important topic is how the increasing number of regional transmission

organizations will integrate into the council’s way of doing business.

Meyer expects to see reliability legislation passed within two years. “No one knows for sure at this point what all will come with the legislation, but very likely it will provide the legal basis for mandatory membership by all industry participants in the NERC Reliability Councils. It will also provide NERC the legal basis for imposing sanctions on those who violate the reliability criteria, rather than using the WSCC contractual approach.”

Meyer currently devotes approximately 25 percent of his time to WSCC issues. Of his new position, Meyer said, “I’m excited to give it a try, but in these turbulent times, it’s quite a challenge. The next five to 10 years are going to be quite a ride.”